

South Carolina Youth Welland Burnside

Honored for Conservation Leadership



Reston, VA (Nov. 16) – America's leading conservation organization dedicated to protecting wildlife has honored 18-year-old Welland Burnside of Murrells Inlet with its National Conservation Achievement Award for protecting wildlife and natural resources for our children's future.

Burnside received his award in the youth category from the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) at an annual awards dinner last night in Washington, DC. Julie Scardina, animal ambassador for SeaWorld and Busch Gardens,

presented the award.

"Welland is an amazing young man who is the epitome of advocacy in action," says Larry Schweiger, President and CEO of National Wildlife Federation. "Because of Welland's leadership on behalf of the environment and charitable causes our planet's future looks much brighter."

Welland Burnside began his charitable works in 1995 at the age of six, co-founding the organization "Suitcases for Kids" with his then 9-year old sister, Aubyn. When Burnside discovered that foster children often carried their belongings in black plastic garbage bags as they relocated from family to family, he was moved to action. "Suitcases for Kids" was born, providing suitcases and a sense of dignity in the lives of foster children. Burnside has remained active for eleven years as President of the nonprofit organization, which today has chapters in all 50 states and 83 foreign countries. Burnside's benevolence was again inspired six years ago upon the loss of his young, cancer-stricken friend, Alex. He founded "Animals for Alex," through which he has collected over 175,000 stuffed animals for children who are in traumatic situations or victims of natural disasters. The organization was recently recognized by President George W. Bush for sending over 1000 stuffed animals to children in Iraq.

With a successful track record of initiating and sustaining charitable programs, Burnside turned his sites to conservation. Through the Department of Natural Resources, Burnside founded a local effort of SCORE (South Carolina Oyster Restoration and Enhancement) to restore oyster beds and monitor water quality. He is a Youth Board Member of EarthForce and a Youth Advisor for Ranger Rick and Weekly Reader magazines. He has published an article in the Encyclopedia of Environmental Science on turtle excluder devices (a device that allows sea turtles to escape from shrimp trawling nets). Burnside is a ten-year volunteer of the South Carolina Parks and also works with SCUTE (South Carolina United Turtle Enthusiasts) to protect endangered sea turtles.

Burnside, an 18-year-old home-schooled honor student and Eagle Scout, lives in Murrells Inlet, South Carolina. He has been honored by Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush for his community service efforts. Burnside skillfully rallies individuals and groups to a cause and sets an awesome example for others to take personal initiative to change the world.

The youth National Conservation Achievement Award is one of 12 categories established to showcase outstanding contributions of individuals and organizations to conservation and environmental protection. The awards have been presented annually since 1965. Nominations are received from

conservationists and the general public nationwide, with winners selected by NWF's board of directors.

The National Wildlife Federation is America's conservation organization protecting wildlife for our children's future.

Immediate Release: November 17, 2006

Contact: Janet Vandervaat – 703-438-6018, vandervaatj@nwf.org. A Photo of Burnside receiving his award will be available on NWF web site's newsroom (<http://www.nwf.org/news>) by Friday afternoon Eastern time. The photo will be posted under News Releases, "Photos of National Conservation Achievement Award Winners."